



United States
Department
of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency
Massachusetts State Office

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Lobsters – Payments Update

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program is administered by another United States Department of Agriculture agency, the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). The Farm Service Agency (FSA) was requested by FAS to handle signup and payment processing activities for TAA due in part because FSA has local offices that administer a variety of Federal farm programs in all 50 states while FAS does not have any “local” offices.

In addition to lobstermen in New England, signup was also open to shrimp producers in the Southeastern United States, Texas and Alaska, along with producers of blueberries in Maine. Since the value of applications for all covered commodities far exceeded the limited amount of TAA funding available to fund producers of these commodities at the maximum levels (\$4,000 maximum for intensive education and \$8,000 maximum for development of a long-term business plan), a payment factor has to be determined that will apply to all producers of the commodities.

Until that factor is determined and downloaded by FAS to FSA software, we are unable to issue any payments. FSA in Massachusetts has made numerous inquiries with the FSA National Office to find out when the payment factor will be determined and downloaded onto the FSA software so that we can begin to issue payments. We have been told that until all applications for all covered commodities are loaded and reconciled in the web-based system, a payment factor cannot be determined, and, as such, payments cannot be issued. FSA State Executive Director Richard Burke has strongly recommended to the FSA National Office that a preliminary factor be determined so that at least a portion of the initial TAA payment can be issued immediately to TAA participants who have completed the initial round of training and business plan development. We are awaiting word on that recommendation.

This explanation likely does little to alleviate the fact that as a lobsterman you may have completed your requirements, and, as such, should be expected to receive your payment. We certainly understand the questions and perhaps frustrations with this process. Until the national payment factor has been determined and downloaded to our software, we have no capability to issue any TAA payments. Please be assured that once the payment factor has been downloaded to FSA software, FSA Offices in Massachusetts will issue those payments promptly to all eligible TAA participants. Thank you for your patience.